

Health-Preserving, Life-Prolonging Moxibustion

By Liu Zheng-cai

Over the centuries, Daoists have developed a number of effective, health-preserving moxa methods.

San Li Moxibustion

It is said in the *Wai Tai Mi Yao (Secret Essentials of the External Platform)* that unless *san li* (St 36) is moxaed regularly, a person above 30 will experience *qi* ascent and dim vision.

This practice of moxaing *san li* was propagated all across China and was finally introduced to Japan. In Japan, there is a story on the fabulous effects of moxaing *san li*. It is said that on the 11th day of the ninth month in 1159 C.E., a grand bridge opening ceremony was held in Japan. A family of long-lived persons was invited to be present to wish that the bridge be ever-lasting. The patriarch was 242 years old; his wife was 221. Their son was 196, while their daughter-in-law was 193. Their grandson was 151 and he had a 138-year-old wife. Many of the people present were amazed to see three grandparents who were so old, and asked how they kept so fit. The grandfather replied, "We have no other art but moxaing *san li* for generations." This led to the widespread use of a proverb that all sorts of disastrous diseases could be deterred by continually moxaing *san li*.

At West China Medical University in Sichuan, there is an acupuncture professor who is over 90 years old. This professor still practices acupuncture on patients. Other than a couple of colds, he has never had any serious disease in his life. His hearing and vision are still acute, his steps are still nimble, and his viscera and bowels still function regularly. This professor ascribes his good health and long life to moxaing *san li* incessantly for many years. In an article written by his son, it is said that he has been moxaing this point with wheat grain-sized cones from the first to the eighth day every month for over 60 years.

Qi Hai Moxibustion

Moxaing *qi hai* (CV6) as a way of promoting one's health began in the Tang dynasty. In the *Qian Jin Fang* (*Prescriptions [Worth] a Thousand [Pieces of] Gold*), True Person Sun said that *qi hai* "rules the *qi*, enabling it to visit the five viscera." As the sea of the original *qi*, this acupoint connects with the five viscera and provides them with supplies of *qi*. Therefore, moxaing *qi hai* nourishes life and promotes health.

In the *Jiu Tang Shu* (*An Old Book of the Tang*), a story says that the outstanding statesman and pre-eminent calligrapher Liu Gong-quan (778-865 C.E.) still had a spring in his step when over 80 years of age. When asked how he managed to keep himself fit, Liu answered, "I only keep *qi hai* constantly warm." By this, Liu meant that he constantly moxaed *qi hai*.

The author of the *Zhen Jiu Zi Sheng Jing* (*Life-Sustaining Classic of Acupuncture and Moxibustion*) once said, "I used to be liable to disease, often suffering from shortness of breath. A physician told me to moxa *qi hai*. As a result, [I] was relieved of rapid breathing. Since then, I perform this moxaing once or twice a year."

***Guan Yuan* Moxibustion**

Dou Cai (1196-1280 C.E.), in his *Bian Que Xin Shu* (*Bian Que's Heart Book*), tells the following story. During the Shao Xin reign (1131-1162 CE), an infantryman named Wang Chao deserted from the army and was reduced to becoming a bandit. Later, he met an esoteric man who taught him a Daoist method of life-sustaining alchemy. As a result, even at the advanced age of 90, Wang had a brilliant, energetic, chubby face and could make love with 10 women a day without evidencing any fatigue.

Some time later, Wang was arrested. Before he was executed, a curious official asked him whether he really had some esoteric art to maintain life. He replied, "Nothing except for the power of fire." He went on to explain this cryptic response. Wang said that each year between summer and autumn, he never failed to burn 1,000 cones of moxa at *guan yuan* (CV4). Because of this practice, he was able to defy cold and summer heat, and he felt no hunger even after having nothing to eat for days. He concluded:

"Even now, I have a patch below [my] navel which feels warm like fire. Have you not heard that when clay has been made into bricks and wood turned into charcoal, they never decay for 1,000 years? All this depends on the power of fire."

In his book, Dou Cai points that as a person gets older, the yang qi becomes debilitated:

"Therefore, while one is yet free from disease, one should regularly moxa *guan yuan*, *qi hai* (CV6) and *zhong wan* (CV12). Thus, even though no one can really become an immortal, one may live over 100 years."

Based on his own experience, a contemporary acupuncture expert, Liu Jie-sheng, once said, "Moxaing *guan yuan* and *qi hai* is able to recover the original yang to rescue expiry and mend life. When Daoists underscore concentration on the cinnabar field (*dan tian*) in exercises, they mean to have the original *qi* return to the root."

Liu moxaed *qi hai* for five days around the beginning of spring and *guan yuan* for five days around the beginning of autumn each year. He performed this moxibustion with date-sized cones over a slice of uncooked ginger punctured with several holes. If one moxas once a day, in 10 days, one may use up to 300 cones.

Liu once treated a 72-year-old patient with this moxa method. The patient had undergone a prostatectomy. The patient was listless, haggard and short of breath. He had dim vision and had to walk with a stick. When he walked, he would pant for breath.

Liu taught this patient life-nourishing moxibustion without prescribing any other medicine. Around the beginning of spring and autumn, the patient, as instructed, moxaed *qi hai* and *guan yuan* for five days with about 300 cones at each point altogether. In addition, he was told to moxa *zu san li* (St36) and *zhong wan* (CV12) with 60 cones each.

By the following year, the patient was able to walk without the help of a stick, and his appetite had increased considerably. He felt energetic and walked with a light step, with no more panting. He was also able to go to work as usual. Later, this patient kept doing this moxa therapy around the beginning of spring and autumn. For more than 10 years, the patient never suffered from disease until he died at the age of 91.



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